

EDITORIAL



SIENNA: Leading the IEN Journey

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SIENNA: Leading the IEN Journey

The Society of Internationally Educated Nurses and Nursing Allies (SIENNA) exists to serve as a professional home and collective voice for internationally educated nurses and nursing allies across all stages of their journey. Grounded in equity, advocacy, and inclusion, SIENNA supports internationally educated nurses (IEN) by amplifying their perspectives in conversations related to nursing mobility and migration, professional development, and career advancement. More than an organization, SIENNA is a lifeline and a community, providing access to continuing education, advocacy initiatives, and leadership development that promote successful acculturation and professional integration. Through this work, SIENNA envisions a future where internationally educated nurses are empowered, visible, and leading innovation, equity, and excellence in nursing worldwide.

SIENNA's early years were marked by the necessary growing pains of an emerging organization. As its foundation was laid by founding directors and ambassadors, SIENNA faced challenges to its viability and continued to refine and redefine its purpose. Throughout these formative stages, the organization remained steadfast in its mission.

As SIENNA matured as an organization, its focus shifted from foundational development to strategic growth and long-term sustainability. This evolution reflects both lessons learned and renewed clarity of purpose. We extend our gratitude to our founder, Dr. Jasper Tolarba, for his vision in establishing a professional home for IENs. As SIENNA continues to expand its influence, I invite you to reflect with me on the year 2025, a period of rapid growth, and what lies ahead in 2026.

2025: A Year of Rapid Growth and Globalization

The year 2025 marked a breakthrough moment for SIENNA. It became clear that in order to sustain and advance its vision, strategic focus must center on growth and global expansion. The organization welcomed a new Board of Directors who immediately began laying the framework for SIENNA's trajectory over the next two years.

In alignment with its evolving mission, SIENNA formally rebranded as a global organization. The Board successfully renamed and registered the organization as the Society of Internationally Educated Nurses and Nursing Allies, formerly known as the Society of Internationally Educated Nurses in North America. By removing "North America" from its official name, SIENNA fostered

a more inclusive identity that truly reflects its diverse global network of ambassadors, members, and leaders.

A long-standing organizational goal was realized in November 2025 with the hosting of SIENNA's First Global IEN Conference. This inaugural in-person event demonstrated the power of community and the strength of unified voices sharing the lived experiences of IENs. Attendees included members of the Board of Directors, global ambassadors, and key stakeholders, including IEN advocate Dr. Franklin Shaffer and NCSBN Policy Director Dr. Nancy Spector. Special video messages were delivered during the conference by Dr. Liz Westcott, President of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing; Dr. Ena Williams, President of the American Organization for Nursing Leadership; Dr. Bradley Goettl-Ng, Chief Nursing Officer of the American Nurses Association Enterprise; Dr. José Luis Cobos Serrano, President of the International Council of Nurses; Dr. Valerie Grdisa, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Nurses Association; and Dr. Bonnie Barnes, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of The DAISY Foundation. The conference concluded with a strong call to action, emphasizing collaboration to advance leadership, advocacy, innovation, and global partnership for internationally educated nurses.

By the end of 2025, SIENNA's membership had more than doubled, attracting prominent nursing leaders and expanding its reach across all six continents. During the same period, organizational revenue increased tenfold. This growth highlights the importance of not only

expanding membership, but also strengthening retention through meaningful engagement, leadership opportunities, and sustained value for ambassadors.

To strengthen engagement and retention, SIENNA launched the Ambassador Hub, providing members with centralized access to organizational updates and resources. Quarterly Town Hall meetings were also introduced to foster transparency, dialogue, and active member participation. Together, these initiatives reinforce trust, connection, and shared ownership of SIENNA's mission, which are essential to long-term membership retention and organizational resilience.

SIENNA was approved as a Continuing Education Provider by the Alabama Board of Nursing, paving the way for high-quality, accessible continuing education for its ambassadors.

Additionally, SIENNA partnered with Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing to offer free continuing education hours through the Nurse Learning Exchange. These efforts underscore SIENNA's commitment to delivering rigorous, relevant, and equitable educational opportunities tailored to the unique professional needs of internationally educated nurses.

As SIENNA continues to grow its global footprint, the organization has actively engaged nursing organizations, academic institutions, and healthcare systems to establish partnerships and collaborative agreements. These collaborations expand opportunities for ambassadors, strengthen shared learning and advocacy, and elevate SIENNA's presence and influence as a trusted global representative of internationally educated nurses. This includes ongoing collaborations with the DAISY Award, WCEA (World Continuing Education Alliance), and other aligned organizations.

SIENNA also established the Fellowship of Internationally Educated Nurses (FSIEN), the organization's highest distinction recognizing excellence among IENs. Fellows are leaders and experts aligned with LEADS competencies, advancing leadership, education, advocacy, diversity, equity and inclusion, and scholarship. During the First Global IEN Conference, the FSIEN Founding Committee, Dr. Paul Biluan, Dr. Jasper Tolarba, Dr. Laura Whittaker, and Dr. Alessandro Steviano, with approval from the SIENNA Board of Directors, inducted 9 Honorary Fellows and 27 Inaugural Fellows.

SIENNA also convened a team of subject matter experts to develop the Transition to Practice Whitepaper, currently underway and targeted for publication in the first quarter of 2026. This white paper aims to guide healthcare organizations in ethically onboarding and supporting IENs, improving retention and ensuring smoother professional transitions.

Collectively, the achievements of 2025 reflect SIENNA's intentional focus on sustainable growth and retention. By investing in leadership development, education, engagement, partnerships, and policy, SIENNA continues to strengthen its foundation while ensuring that internationally educated nurses are supported not only in entering practice, but in thriving throughout their careers.

2026: Sustaining the Impact

As SIENNA enters a new year, the organization embraces a renewed call to deepen global engagement, strengthen advocacy, and expand opportunities for professional growth.

Ambassadors can expect continued development of global programs, increased visibility of internationally educated nurse leadership, and enhanced scholarly and policy initiatives. This year, SIENNA will place deliberate emphasis on collaboration and strategic partnerships as key drivers of sustained impact. By strengthening relationships with nursing organizations, academic institutions, healthcare systems, and global stakeholders, SIENNA aims to expand its influence and amplify the collective voice of internationally educated nurses. These partnerships will support shared learning, ethical workforce practices, leadership development, and policy advancement, positioning SIENNA as a trusted global convener and advocate for IENs across regions and practice settings.

I encourage every member of our community to remain engaged, invite others into this work, and reflect on how you can contribute to SIENNA's mission in the year ahead. Your involvement continues to shape a stronger, more inclusive future for internationally educated nurses and nursing allies worldwide.

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President

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